Chapter 11
Reasons for Divorce in Kuwait: An Application of the Likelihood of Divorce Inventory (LDI)

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Abstract This chapter employs the Likelihood of Divorce Inventory (LDI) to investigate married university students' assessment of reasons for divorce in Kuwait. The sample comprises 443 participants; about 37.5% are men and 62.5% are women. Exploratory factor analysis reveals that three LDI items—negative relationship and lack of respect, differences in behavior and personality, and psychological and physical illness—explain 63.5% of the variance. Participants generally hold positive attitudes toward the reasons for divorce, with infidelity, spousal abuse, and drug/alcohol abuse being among the most prominently reported. However, there are statistically significant gender differences regarding attitudes toward specific reasons for divorce, with women being more sensitive to inventory situations and supporting divorce at greater rates than men.

Keywords Gender · Reasons for divorce · Likelihood of Divorce Inventory · Kuwait

11.1 Introduction

Divorce refers to the dissolution of marriage, and is a universal social phenomenon. Murdock's (1950) study on family stability in non-European countries found that systems of divorce were present in 39 of 40 investigated societies. In Kuwait, tremendous social changes over the last few decades have made divorce a key social problem. To provide some context, Kuwait is a small country that was once defined by its traditional society; however, following the discovery of rich oil deposits and subsequent exports from 1946 onward, it transformed into a modern social and economic nation. In the 1960s, the total population of Kuwait was as low as 269,000; by 2019, this had grown to an estimated 4.4 million, comprising roughly 1.3 million Kuwaiti citizens and 3.1 million expatriates. The population is mostly urban, with approximately 83% living in the capital. High immigration rates and heavy dependence on foreign labor

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have formed a large working-age population (aged 15 to 64 years), which accounts for about 75% of the total (Central Statistical Bureau, 2020; Population Division of the Department of Economic & Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, 2018). The major social changes brought on by these circumstances have also resulted in a significant increase in the number of divorces.

Kuwait has been moving toward both modernization and urbanization since the discovery of oil, with high revenues affecting nearly every aspect of sociocultural life; of particular note, education is now widely available to both men and women. Meanwhile, dramatic social changes have also resulted in a variety of contradictions and challenges, including weakened family support systems, the need for legal reforms, and a new awareness of gender rights and duties (Al-Kazi, 2008). Further, the many job opportunities that have opened up have altered traditional gender roles, providing women with more economic autonomy and shifting the course of society toward individuation. Many factors have contributed to the high divorce rate, including a move from the extended to nuclear family structure, an increase in the number of heterogamous marriages, and many psychological, cultural, social, and financial factors.

In 2017, estimates showed about 76,000 divorce cases in Gulf Cooperation Council countries, with a general divorce rate of 2.2%. Saudi Arabia was the highest at 2.3%, followed by Kuwait at 2.2% (Statistical Center of the Gulf Cooperation Council, 2017). In this context, divorce has become a broad public concern, for reasons including spousal abuse and neglect, interference by parents and relatives, and limited contact during the engagement period (Al-Najjer, 2003). However, relatively few studies have investigated the attitudes Kuwaiti youths hold toward marriage and divorce. Alqashan and Alkandari (2010) found that adults whose fathers had chosen to separate from their spouses were less likely to hold positive attitudes toward marriage when compared to those whose parents maintained healthy marriages; these same individuals were also more likely to hold positive attitudes toward divorce. However, there is generally a lack of scholarly information on the subject, which highlights the importance of continued research.

While several self-reported divorce-related instruments have been developed in Kuwait, there is neither a comprehensive scale for assessing youths' attitudes nor sufficient information about what these individuals believe are the main causes. We addressed this gap by validating the comprehensive Likelihood of Divorce Inventory (LDI) for use in Kuwait. This is the first study in Kuwait to quantify divorce-related factors in married university students through factor analysis.

11.2   Divorce in the Existing Literature

Divorce is a significant social issue that contributes to numerous psychological problems, such as anxiety and depression. In the preventive context, therefore, adequate evaluations are crucial. Divorce is defined as the termination of marriage (Plummer & Koch-Hattem, 1986, p. 524) and often results in substantial economic, physical, and

mental burdens for all affected parties (Sbarra et al., 2014), particularly owing to feelings of lost social support and diminished family integration. Looking at Durkheim's perspective on social integration, this may increase the risk of suicide (Kposowa, 2000). Divorce negatively affects children in all psychological, physical, social, and emotional aspects, while causing poor performance and inefficiency for the entire family (Portes et al., 2000), often with devastating social consequences for young children and adolescents (Hill & Kopp, 2015). In sum, divorce has lasting effects on children and adolescents, who may face greater relationship difficulties and are at an increased risk of divorce when compared to their counterparts with non-divorced parents (Kahl et al., 2007; Kunz, 2001).

Spouses typically go through several stages before they obtain a legal divorce. The first contributing stage, emotional divorce (Kaslow, 1980), is a psychological mechanism that some spouses employ when they feel the marriage has become a threat to their well-being. Once an individual is emotionally divorced from their spouse, they have separated their emotions from the marriage (Al-Ubaidi, 2017). Two periods are highly important for the survival of marriage: (a) the first seven years, during which approximately half of all divorces occur and (b) the period when the first child reaches age 14, which is often considered a low point in marital satisfaction (Gottman & Levenson, 2000). In this context, divorce occurs in 50% of first marriages and 60% of second marriages (Cohen & American Academy of Pediatrics. Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, 2002).

Many variables are related to divorce and family stability in Kuwaiti society, including the level of acquaintance/interaction between spouses, age at marriage, religious sect, tribal background, income, presence of children/education, desire to marry, employment outside home, working hours, and social position of the family owing to marriage. As such, there are many predictors of divorce, including demographic/economic factors and personal factors (Amato, 2010).

Certain marriages are at greater risk of ending in divorce, for instance, those in which the spouses are under the age of 30 and if the wife has a higher educational level than the husband (Linlin, 1993). Other variables that increase the risk of divorce include low education/income, previous marriages, cohabitation before marriage, low religious affiliation, and witnessing divorce as a child (Amato & Silver, 1997). Meanwhile, the longer a marriage continues without problems, the lower the likelihood of consenting to divorce (Thornton, 1985).

In a study among interracial couples, Wong (2009) found that it was beneficial to identify and teach individuals about basic risk factors and the need for flexibility prior to marriage. Amato and DeBoer (2001) reported that low marital commitment contributed to a lack of optimism that potential marital problems could be fixed, with such couples being less likely to remain in the marriage after experiencing difficulty. Hawkins et al. (2012) found that two common reasons for asking for divorce included growing apart and lack of interpersonal communication, while Amato and Prevti (2003) reported infidelity as the most common cause, followed by incompatibility, alcohol/drug abuse, and growing apart. The reasons for divorce also differ based on

gender, social class, and life course variables. De Graaf and Kalmijn (2006) showed that the most common causes of divorce were violence and infidelity, with less severe factors including relationship problems such as growing apart and insufficient attention.

We investigated the attitudes of married young people toward divorce. Research has shown that negative attitudes toward divorce are associated with stronger decreases in social contact following divorce (Kalmijn & Uunk, 2007). There are also two notable factors that influence attitudes toward divorce at the national level, including the societal prevalence of divorce and level of secularization (Norris & Inglehart, 2004). Kapinus (2005) examined the attitudes young people held toward divorce based on the quality of their parents' marriages, finding that low levels of marital quality were less likely to result in approving attitudes toward divorce. De Coninck et al. (2021) reported that students in 2018 tended to hold more positive attitudes toward divorce when compared to students in 2002. Whitton et al. (2013) pointed out that remarried adults were more likely to have negative attitudes toward divorce than those in their first marriages when experiencing marital distress, which may reflect a weaker commitment to marriage. The intergenerational transmission of divorce theory confirms that attitudes and patterns related to marriage are often passed on to children, in which case those from divorced families are at a higher risk of divorce in their own eventual marriages (Amato, 1996). However, Landis-Kleine et al. (1995) found that young adults generally held positive attitudes toward marriage and commitment, and that parental marital status did not significantly affect their attitudes about marriage or divorce.

While several existing scales are available to assess how young people perceive divorce, we developed a unique scale to reflect the social reality of Kuwaiti society. The LDI measures attitudes toward divorce based on 19 reasons, then asks participants to indicate their likelihood of seeking divorce. Mulder and Gunnoe (1999) developed a similar scale to assess the likelihood of divorce, albeit only according to seven hypothetical situations. In this regard, an expanded scale is important (Fam et al., 2017), showing the existence of more attitudes toward divorce.

11.3 Objectives and Research Questions

We aimed to clarify what types of attitudes Kuwaiti youth hold toward various reasons for divorce. As divorce becomes increasingly common in Kuwait, it is important to understand what youths, who now comprise more than 70% of the population (Central Statistical Bureau, 2020), think about the nature of divorce, thus providing an outlook for future conditions. The LDI results should also reflect the degree of sensitivity to key causes for divorce in this population, thereby providing information on specific mechanisms. We also sought to assess and verify the psychometric properties of the LDI within the context of Kuwaiti society. Finally, we set out to determine whether male and female participants held different attitudes toward divorce based on their general and subscale responses. Prior to conducting this study, we established the

following research questions: Question 1: What are the basic dimensions of the LDI responses using exploratory factor analysis (EFA)? Question 2: What attitudes do Kuwait University students hold toward various reasons for divorce? Question 3: Do male and female students at Kuwait University hold different attitudes toward the various reasons for divorce?

11.4   Research Methods

This study employed a cross-sectional design. In 2019, via random sampling, we recruited 443 married students at Kuwait University, obtained through an electronic questionnaire via Google Apps. They were selected from the students of Kuwait University in the six governorates of the State of Kuwait. Participants completed a questionnaire that sought sociodemographic information and also contained the LDI. It took three weeks to complete the questionnaire. The participants were not given any specific instructions. The sociodemographic questionnaire included gender, age, marital status, and economic level. This study developed the LDI for use in Kuwait. Although based on the literature (Fink & Shapiro, 2018; Kapinus & Flowers, 2008), our instrument included a total of 19 reasons for divorce. While Alqashan and Alkandari (2010) previously used 29 reasons, our pilot study among 20 married students at Kuwait University showed that the instrument could be refined to 19 probable causes of divorce. Subsequently, three professors of sociology and social work at Kuwait University established its content validity.

The LDI utilizes a scenario-based style in which respondents are required to assume that they are considering divorce. They are then presented with 19 situations and asked to indicate the likelihood of proceeding with divorce using a seven-point scale for each, in which 1 = very unlikely, 2 = greatly unlikely, 3 = somewhat unlikely, 4 = not sure, 5 = somewhat likely, 6 = greatly likely, and 7 = very likely, and the total score range of the instrument is 133 scores. In this study, EFA was used to identify the underlying dimensions of the participants' responses. Finally, we used Cronbach's alpha to measure internal consistency between items in each of these groups. The eight items under negative relationship and lack of respect yielded an alpha of 0.924, the seven items under differences in behavior and personality yielded an alpha of 0.829, and the four items under psychological and physical illness yielded an alpha of 0.751. In sum, all areas were deemed highly reliable. The data were individually analyzed for each research question. SPSS version 19 was used for all analyses (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA.).

Prior to the factor analysis, the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity were calculated as 0.894 ($p < 0001$), respectively. We conducted an EFA among the 19 probable divorce situations to identify correlations that could be used to establish factor groups. We thus found that three factors explained 63.5% of the variance. Next, we conducted a varimax rotation, redistributing the factor loadings to reflect the three major components, which we labeled as follows: (1) negative relationship and lack of respect (items: 1 (Your spouse

had an affair), 2 (Your spouse physically abuses you), 3 (Substance abuse (drugs or alcohol), 4, 8, 9, 10, and 17)); (2) differences in behavior and personality (items: 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, and 14); and (3) psychological and physical illness (items: 15, 16, 18, and 19). We conducted a descriptive analysis of responses to all 19 LDI items. A subsequent analysis was conducted to assess possible differences between male and female participants, with an independent samples t-test used to investigate gender differences in views concerning the three factors extracted during the EFA. Students provided a written consent to participate, and an institutional review board approved the study**.**

Selecting a sample of married students on campus was a challenge. Furthermore, the study did not include unmarried students for comparison. To assess the depth of divorce as a social problem, future studies should include young and adult Kuwaitis. Finally, the questionnaire did not include variables on family history, parents' relationship, and marriage quality.

11.5   Results

About 463 male and female students were recruited and only 443 data were analyzed, as 20 male and female students did not answer the questionnaire correctly. Of the 443 participants, 275 (62.1%) were women and 168 (37.5%) were men and all were between the ages of 18 and 28 (M = 23 years, SD = 4.7). Importantly, this gender distribution reflected the university-wide population structure. The majority of participants came from middle-class (83.5%) backgrounds (monthly income between 3,000 and 5,000 Kuwaiti Dinar), with smaller proportions coming from lower classes (2.3%) (monthly income under 3,000 Kuwaiti Dinar) and higher classes (14.2%) (monthly income more than 3000 Kuwaiti Dinar). Furthermore, the majority of participants' parents were still married (88.3%), with others reported divorce or death (11.7%).

Table 11.1 shows how participants perceived each of the 19 situations both in general and based on gender, while Table 11.2 presents their response distributions for the three main LDI components. Here, mean scores of four and above indicated the likelihood of divorce. Regardless of gender, Table 11.1 shows that participants generally held positive attitudes toward the 13 items, with infidelity, spousal physical abuse, and substance abuse being the most serious (likelihood scores of 5.10, 5.10, and 5.03, respectively). Situations with lower severity included the lack of respect on behalf of one spouse (M = 4.72), feeling put down or belittled and insulted by one's spouse (M = 4.60), not meeting family obligations (M = 4.50), immaturity (improper and childish behavior) (M = 4.32), spouse being too dependent upon or closely tied to own family (M = 4.28), unhappiness in marriage (M = 4.27), mental health disorder (M = 4.24), constant arguments and quarrels with spouse (M = 4.11), sexual intimacy problems (M = 4.11), and incompatible personalities (M = 4.06). The remaining six items were not as significant.

Table 11.1 Descriptive statistics of most probable situations for divorce: Men and women (N = 443)

Items	n	M	SD
Your spouse had an affair	430	5.10	2.204
Your spouse physically abuses you	435	5.10	2.331
Substance abuse (drugs or alcohol)	432	5.03	2.354
The lack of respect on behalf of one spouse	434	4.72	1.876
Feeling put down or belittled and insulted by spouse	433	4.60	2.032
Not meeting family obligations	431	4.50	1.859
Immaturity (improper and childish behavior)	430	4.32	1.823
Spouse too dependent upon or closely tied to own family	431	4.28	1.817
Unhappy in marriage	435	4.27	1.741
Mental health disorder	434	4.24	1.891
Constant arguments and quarrels with spouse	437	4.11	1.755
Sexual intimacy problems	425	4.11	1.528
Incompatible personalities	430	4.06	1.708
You do not love your spouse anymore	435	3.99	1.719
Spouse infertile	435	3.83	1.810
Spouse spends too much time with friends outside the house	431	3.77	1.516
Indifference to financial spending	433	3.67	1.462
Chronic illness	435	3.61	1.773
Financial problems	427	3.54	1.634

Note M: mean; SD: standard deviation

Tables 11.2 and 11.3 show gender differences regarding views of divorce situations to varying degrees. Women supported divorce in 14 situations, while men were only in favor of seven. Women were also more sensitive to situations in which husbands physically abused their wives, overindulged in drugs/alcohol, and engaged in infidelity (M = 5.34, 5.26, and 5.21, respectively). On the contrary, for men, infidelity was the primary factor that increased the likelihood of divorce (M = 4.91), followed by physical abuse (M = 4.69) and substance abuse (M = 4.63). It is, thus, clear that women were more likely to seek divorce for the three most prominent situations. However, all participants agreed about the importance of the remaining situations (substance abuse, spousal abuse, insulting spouse, disrespecting spouse, not meeting family obligations, and spouse being too dependent upon or closely tied to own family). The fact that women supported divorce under seven more conditions than men seems to indicate that they were generally more sensitive to stressful dynamics. It also revealed that the likelihood of divorce increased with the severity of the situation.

Table 11.2 Descriptive statistics of most probable situations for divorce: Women (n = 275)

Items	n	M	SD
Your spouse physically abuses you	273	5.34	2.312
Substance abuse (drugs or alcohol)	272	5.26	2.266
Your spouse had an affair	271	5.21	2.162
Feeling put down or belittled and insulted by spouse	272	4.83	1.952
The lack of respect on behalf of one spouse	272	4.81	1.862
Not meeting family obligations	271	4.67	1.799
Mental health disorder	271	4.55	1.924
Immaturity (improper and childish behavior)	271	4.52	1.823
Unhappy in marriage	272	4.49	1.758
Spouse too dependent upon or closely tied to own family	270	4.35	1.762
Constant arguments and quarrels with spouse	273	4.32	1.735
Sexual intimacy problems	265	4.31	1.436
Incompatible personalities	269	4.19	1.705
You do not love your spouse anymore	270	4.17	1.680
Spouse infertile	273	3.97	1.758
Indifference to financial spending	270	3.84	1.379
Chronic illness	273	3.82	1.645
Spouse spends too much time with friends outside the house	268	3.80	1.434
Financial problems	269	3.65	1.505

Table 11.4 shows the independent t-test results for gender differences regarding the three main attitudinal components established via the EFA: negative relationship and lack of respect; differences in behavior and personality; and psychological and physical illness. We found statistically significant differences between men and women regarding their attitudes toward the listed reasons for divorce and the three dimensions. Women tended to hold stronger attitudes; for instance, their mean score for negative relationship and lack of respect (M = 34.0, SD = 11.4) was higher than that for men (M = 30.7, SD = 11.4), with a mean difference of 3.26. This difference was statistically significant (t = −2.79, p = 0.01). More specifically, this scale component included items related to insulting behavior, lack of spousal love, physical abuse, infidelity, unhappy marriage, not meeting family obligations, and substance abuse.

Focusing on the behavior and personality scale, which included items related to incompatible personalities; situations in which spouses spent significant amounts of time outside the home or were too dependent on their families; financial problems; immaturity; and sexual intimacy issues, Table 11.4 shows that women had a higher mean score than men (M = 28.6, SD = 8.0 vs M = 26.3, SD = 8.0; mean difference of 2.29; statistically significant at t = −2.74, p = 0.01). Women, thus, exhibited stronger

Table 11.3 Descriptive statistics of most probable situations for divorce: Men (n = 168)

Items	n	M	SD
Your spouse had an affair	159	4.91	2.268
Your spouse physically abuses you	162	4.69	2.315
Substance abuse (drugs or alcohol)	160	4.63	2.454
The lack of respect on behalf of one spouse	162	4.56	1.895
Feeling put down or belittled and insulted by spouse	161	4.21	2.111
Not meeting family obligations	160	4.20	1.926
Spouse too dependent upon or closely tied to own family	161	4.17	1.906
Immaturity (improper and childish behavior)	159	3.99	1.781
Unhappy in marriage	163	3.90	1.650
Incompatible personalities	161	3.84	1.698
Constant arguments and quarrels with spouse	164	3.78	1.741
Sexual intimacy problems	160	3.78	1.621
Mental health disorder	163	3.73	1.725
Spouse spends too much time with friends outside the house	163	3.72	1.645
You do not love your spouse anymore	165	3.71	1.750
Spouse infertile	162	3.58	1.874
Indifference to financial spending	163	3.39	1.553
Financial problems	158	3.35	1.823
Chronic illness	162	3.25	1.922

Note M: mean; SD: standard deviation

Table 11.4 T-Test: Likelihood of divorce regarding three factors for men and women

Likelihood of divorce Factors	Gender	n	M (SD)	T
Negative relationship and lack of respect	Men	148	30.7 (11.4)	−2.79 **
	Women	264	34.0 (11.4)	
Differences in behavior and personality	Men	147	26.3 (8.0)	−2.74 **
	Women	245	28.6 (8.0)	
Psychological and physical illness	Men	159	14.4 (5.3)	−4.2 **
	Women	271	16.7 (5.4)	

Note M: mean; SD: standard deviation; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

resentment toward situations in which spouses behaved improperly or lacked social responsibility.

Next, outcomes were similar on the psychological and physical illness scale, which included chronic illness, infertility, mental health disorders, and constant arguments/quarrels with spouses. Women had a higher mean score than men (M = 16.7, SD = 5.4 vs M = 14.4, SD = 5.3; mean difference of 2.27; statistically significant at

t = −4.2, p = 0.01). Again, women were more likely to favor divorce in situations described in this category.

11.6 Discussions

This study investigated the attitudes of Kuwaiti married college students toward reasons for divorce as measured by the LDI. Generally, our findings were in line with those of previous studies, demonstrating that both men and women held positive attitudes toward several reasons for divorce. However, women were generally more sensitive toward the reasons for divorce and tended to support divorce at greater rates than men.

Many studies have examined the causes leading to divorce. Goode (1956) showed that the most mentioned marital complaints are lack of support, excessive drinking, and neglect. Kitson and Marvin (1982) found that women emphasized a former spouse's lack of communication skills, internal family violence, extramarital relationships, mistrust, immaturity, and drinking problems. Kelly (1982) found that women frequently complain about feeling unloved and that their husbands constantly underestimate their competence and intelligence. Fletcher (1983) cited husbands' public and private personality problems, negative attitudes, specific behaviors, and extramarital sexual problems as reasons for divorce. Chang (2003) examined the self-reported causes of divorce in Korean and non-Korean female immigrants. The majority of Korean immigrants cited their husbands' perceived negative/abusive behaviors and financial problems as reasons for divorce, while non-Korean American women tended to report abstract and emotional reasons. The patterns of divorce causes reported by the women in the study appear to be related to their difficult experiences after divorce. Amato and Previti (2003) used National Board data collected between 1980 and 1997 to rank 208 people's answers to a question about why their marriages ended in divorce. Infidelity was the most common cause, followed by incompatibility, drug or alcohol abuse, and divergence from one another. The reasons for divorce differed by gender, social class, and life course variables. While previous studies have generally suggested that women are more tolerant toward divorce, Kapinus and Flowers (2008) found that women were more likely to advocate for making divorce more difficult to obtain. This was also reported by De Coninck et al. (2021), who investigated the attitudes that college students in Belgium held toward marriage and divorce during two periods; students in 2018 held more positive attitudes toward divorce and more negative attitudes toward marriage when compared to those in 2002. Similarly, female students held more positive attitudes toward divorce than male students. Attitudes toward and the propensity for divorce are also affected by personal household experiences, regardless of gender. Several studies (Kapinus, 2005; Mulder & Gunnoe, 1999; Rootalu & Kasearu, 2016) have analyzed gender differences in relation to backgrounds involving parental divorce, parental relationships, and family type, finding that women who come from troubled families have more positive attitudes toward and a greater propensity for divorce when compared to those who come

from intact families. This study provided support for these conclusions through its investigation of the differences between married male and female students based on their responses to both the individual LDI items and three main factor components.

11.7   Implications for Practice

Kuwaiti society is undergoing a drastic social transformation from tradition to modernization: the clash between traditional and modern values over gender roles, especially the changing roles of women, is apparent. Owing to their increasing educational attainment and labor force involvement, women have begun to question the traditional male-dominated culture, which has, in turn, impacted the entire family structure. As a result, divorce rates have increased drastically; collective efforts on the academic as well as societal levels are needed to address this social reality. Therefore, institutions of higher learning should offer academic courses on family issues related to marital social problems, divorce, parenting, and family therapy. Additionally, the legislative body should revise the traditional family laws to reflect the current social changes. The media too have a responsibility to highlight these changes and should provide more coverage of such family laws to create awareness.

This study makes an important contribution to understanding the perceptions of divorce among married male and female students at Kuwait University. However, further research using representative samples from both divorced men and divorced women is recommended.

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